



UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

**Eastman
School of Music**

100 YEARS | 1921-2021

Musica Nova

**Brad Lubman,
music director**

**Georgia Mills
and Luke Poeppel,
assistant conductors**

Wednesday, December 7, 2022
Kilbourn Hall
7:30 PM

~ PROGRAM ~

Musica Nova

Brad Lubman, *music director*

Georgia Mills and Luke Poeppel, *assistant conductors*

Ophelia Dances (1975)

Oliver Knussen

(1952-2018)

8'

Luke Poeppel, *conductor*

Of Being Is a Bird (2015)

(world premiere of alto saxophone version)

Augusta Read Thomas

(b. 1964)

15'

Floris Van der Veken, *alto saxophone*

Brad Lubman, *conductor*

Theater Of The Imagination (2016)

(US Premiere)

Brad Lubman

(b. 1962)

12'

Brad Lubman, *conductor*

“...Einklang freier Wesen...” (1994/95/96)

Georg Friedrich Haas

(b. 1953)

14'

Georgia Mills, *conductor*

~ PERSONNEL ~

Musica Nova

Flute

Eric Bergeman
Dana Cryster

Oboe

Emily Hart

Clarinet

Victor Ni

Bassoon

Avery Dabe
Emma Eisenberg

Horn

Kristin Andlauer
Dylan Kingdom

Trumpet

Daniel Adamczyk

Trombone

Vincent Huang

Tuba

Cole Henslee

Percussion

Sammy DeAngelis
Kana Funayama
Sean McWilliams

Keyboard

Hannah Harnest
Zihan Wu

Harp

Sunshine Quan

Violin

Sophia Klin
Jiaqi Yu

Viola

Rachel Smith
Luke Wardell

Violoncello

Joëlla Becker
Owen Cummings

Double Bass

Carlton Huff

A personal note from Brad Lubman about tonight's program

Sometimes when devising programs, one can look for thematic or stylistic threads that connect one work to another, and other times one might look for juxtapositions of opposites. Yet another approach is to look for personal connections that might exist between the composers on a given program. I first came across that approach to program making from Oliver Knussen and found it to be a refreshing and sometimes intriguing idea. So it is that the first three composers on tonight's program are connected not only by certain aesthetic views, but by personal connections as well. In 1988 I was recommended to be Olly Knussen's assistant conductor for the Tanglewood Music Center's Festival of Contemporary Music. I started working in that capacity in the summer of 1989 when one of the Fellows in Composition was Augusta Read Thomas. Olly asked me to conduct the piece of hers that she composed specifically for that summer's festival. With both Olly and Gusty (as everyone calls them) I felt an immediate connection, with their music, their ways of thinking about music and composing in general, and as people. It is always very special and meaningful to be able to program works by people with whom you have a personal connection or feel a collective musical or artistic connection.

Consequently, the connection to Georg Friedrich Haas is that I have conducted a number of his works over the years, gave the world premiere a few years ago of his *Homage to Bridget Riley*, and worked together with him in various rehearsals over the years. He is an important colleague to me in the world of new-music, and a profound thinker, musician, and composer. The specific work on tonight's program was suggested to me by my DMA conducting student, Georgia Mills, and I was extremely happy she suggested it, hence decided to program it immediately! My knowledge of Haas's music started with a recording of his work *In Vain* which was released in 2003, and was during the period when I stopped composing for acoustic instruments and was only making electronic pieces. *In Vain*, and some other works of Haas in general, were amongst the various pieces of music at that time in 2003-04 that "brought me back", so to speak, to composing for acoustic instruments.

~ PROGRAM NOTES ~

Ophelia Dances

Why is Ophelia dancing? Partly as an instrumental response to Shakespeare's description of her chanting 'snatches of old tunes/ As one incapable of her own distress', and partly because I wanted to write a piece whose light-headed and giddy qualities would suggest a crossing of the line that divides laughter from tears. The 'old tunes' in this piece are Schumann's *Carnaval*, whose mottos provided much of its melodic and harmonic material, and two late works of Debussy, *La boîte à joujoux* and *Gigues*. There is an introduction, four dances (which become more and more compressed) and a long slow coda, all played continuously. *Ophelia Dances* was commissioned by the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation and first performed in New York in May 1975 by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. - **Oliver Knussen**

Of Being is a Bird

Tonight we hear the world premiere of the Alto Saxophone version with soloist Floris Van der Veken performing what was, in the original version, a light lyric soprano singing a pair of songs on texts about birds by Emily Dickinson.

Thomas said:

“Music for me is an embrace of the world – a way to open myself up to being alive in the world in my body, in my sounds, and in my mind. I care deeply about musicality, imagination, craft, clarity, dimensionality, an elegant balance between material and form, and empathy with the performing musicians.”

“My works always spark and catch fire from spontaneous improvisations. It is music always in the act of becoming. I have a vivid sense that the process of the creative journey (rather than a predictable fixed point of arrival) is the essence. Poetry can give language to the ineffable. Music is, in an analogous way, akin to an infinite alphabet. Sounds can become like butterflies, humming-birds, lights, rocks, trees, webs, gardens, and landscapes.”

“I am indebted to Brad Lubman for his longstanding friendship and support of my life’s work and also profoundly grateful to the faculty, students, and staff of the Eastman School of Music.”

About the original soprano version, Paul Griffiths wrote these words which are fully applicable to the Alto Saxophone version:

“Augusta Read Thomas has walked a path — or flown — with Emily Dickinson before, in *Sunlight Echoes* for youth choir and youth orchestra (2002) and *Gathering Paradise*, a song cycle for soprano and symphony orchestra (2004). This new piece is a pair of bird songs — bird songs that indeed have to do with bird songs, with the songs that birds themselves make, but more, as the title poem indicates, with bird being, with how birds are and also with how birdlike — in flight — being is. After all, the singing here is done by a human being, and by a specific human being, for, the composer tells us, she “listened to every recording of Claire Booth I could find and took note of the colour of every pitch in her vocal range.”

“Those colours wind through constantly changing textures of instrumental hue in the opening song, where voice and instruments are forever echoing one another, though only the voice, for the most part, has the long line. If any of the instruments is to the fore, it is perhaps the harp, which, to quote the composer, “provides a kind of golden thread throughout the piece in counterpoint with the solo soprano.” The harmonies, too, are constantly on the move, adjusting to the vocal line while keeping the music afloat and luminous. We might be hearing the clouds of which the poem speaks, or the easy breeze, or the ‘Wake of Music,’ all with a snatch of bird song.”

“Contrastingly fast, and without the singer, the interlude moves from human time to avian, suggesting bird song but perhaps more the darting of birds in motion — birds mimicked by instruments veering off in response to loud ensemble attacks. “The music is built in contrapuntal lines,” the composer points out, “like two lines of birds in a flock that merge and separate and flow and flux together across the sky.” Principal flier at first is the flute, but quite soon everyone takes to the air in virtuoso vertiginousness.”

“The second song recalls the first, but only briefly before the music gains speed and dynamism, as well as some jazzy exuberance. Thomas here, as she notes, “shows off a different side of Claire Booth’s voice and vocal agility.” The singer participates in the triumph, along with the bird triumphing in life — with life triumphing in itself.” - **Copyright © by Paul Griffiths**

Theater Of The Imagination

I conducted the world premiere of *Theater of the Imagination* at the 2017 Grafenegg Festival in Austria, with members of the Tonkünstler Orchestra. I was the composer in residence at the festival that summer and also conducted the world premieres of my *Grafenegg Fanfare* for brass, and *Reflections* for orchestra, all of which were commissioned by the festival.

Most of my music written between 2014-20 deals with the idea of incongruent narrative, the type that one finds in very strange dreams. My idea was to lead the listener in a certain direction (“Oh, this is one of those kinds of pieces”), only to take them suddenly and unexpectedly in a different direction (“Hang on a minute, it’s not one of those pieces, it’s actually one of THOSE pieces....no, wait, it’s a different piece....no.....wait....”). For example, imagine a kind of odd dream in which you are supposed to meet a friend at a train station, you’re standing there at the station when all of a sudden you realize you’re actually not at the train station but standing in a giant swimming pool holding a piece of pizza, but actually the pizza turns out to be a coffee served inside a tambourine and you’re not standing in a swimming pool, rather you’re in the middle of a bowling alley and the friend you were supposed to meet is not your friend but a cat. That’s just one idea of what I mean by incongruent narrative.

Additionally, there are some references to certain music by one or two other composers that are not at all quotations, but serve as a kind of homage. In these few brief moments of homage, there is a sense of nostalgia (something I typically avoid). However, in this case, these nostalgic homage moments are probably because in January 2016 Pierre Boulez passed away, and he was one of two mentors for me, the other Oliver Knussen (who passed away two years later, in 2018, and then two years after that there was this pandemic, you may remember....so I suppose one can say that in some of my music during the past six years or so, a sense of nostalgia occasionally creeps in). One other thing to note is the fact that the pitch Eb becomes a kind of focal point (and in fact is the focal point of the last section of the piece). This could be also a kind of homage or nostalgia: Boulez used a chord in a number of works of his which was derived from the last name of Paul Sacher, the Swiss conductor and patron of contemporary music. Composers sometimes use letters from people’s names to “spell” certain harmonies or melodies. In the case of Sacher, the first letter (‘S’) is spelled as the pitch Eb, be

cause Eb in German is called “es”. So I chose this Eb as an homage to Boulez, but also perhaps to indicate a sense of time passing, for in 2016 it certainly seemed as if many things were feeling different than ever before (needless to say, that feeling really accelerated in 2020).

Having achieved this idea of incongruent narrative in some of my pieces, I now feel it’s time to move in a different direction. The first pieces I ever wrote (in the mid to late 1980s) were very much influenced by the music of Boulez, Carter, and Wuorinen. Then in the 1990s after a two year hiatus from composing, I was rather influenced by the music of Morton Feldman. However, by the end of the 1990s I started to use more diatonic materials in some of my music, only to find myself abandoning writing for acoustic instruments in 2002. At that point, I spent two or three years only making electronic pieces. In 2005 I started to compose for acoustic instruments again in a way that combined much of what I had done before (meaning that I would look for ways to combine the various approaches or styles that had been an influence on my work during the previous 20 years). That took me to 2014 when I finally found an approach to the idea of incongruent narrative, and further developed it in most of my music from 2014-2020. So now, who knows what direction my work might take next. It might be time to turn again to some very serious, structured, and austere work. Or maybe not! :-)

- Brad Lubman

“...Einklang freier Wesen...”

In “...Einklang freier Wesen...” the notion of the “solo ensemble” (like the Klangforum Wien, for whom the piece was written) is taken literally. Each of the work’s ten individual parts is simultaneously a solo piece; to state it differently, the ensemble piece is an interlacing of ten completely independent, autonomous solos. (Smaller “sub-ensembles” have also been conceived: a duo for two percussionists; a trio for viola, cello, and contrabass; a quartet for bass flute, bass clarinet, and two percussionists; and finally, a septet for bass flute, bass clarinet, two percussionists, viola, cello, and contrabass.)

The versions for one to seven instruments are published under the title “*aus freier Lust... verbunden...*” (*Bound ... of free will*), each with corresponding instrumentation indication.

As regards pitch, the parts are bound together by an identical harmonic structure, although it is to be noted that in the solo parts “harmony” is thought of primarily as the effect of successive sound events. As for form, caesuras and units are formed in each individual part, not only independently of other instruments, but also simultaneously with them (as a sort of “solidarity”). The titles are taken from a passage out of Friedrich Hölderlin’s novel Hyperion, paraphrased as follows:

“I feel a life force in me, that no god created and no mortal conceived. I believe that we exist through our own being; and only by virtue of our free will and desire (aus freier Lust) are we intimately bound (verbunden) to the cosmos. [...] What would this world be, were it not a unison of free beings (Einklang freier Wesen), were life not the full-voiced expression of every living being’s joyous desires since the beginning of time - how wooden the world would be! How cold!” (*Hyperion, volume 2, book 2, chapter XXVII*). - **Georg Friedrich Haas**

Upcoming Concerts

Events are free unless otherwise noted.

Monday, December 12

Eastman Wind Ensemble & Eastman Wind Orchestra

Music of Lyons, Grainger, Sweelinck, Schoenberg, Puckett, and Schwantner

Mark Davis Scatterday, Luke Camarillo, and Mason St. Pierre, conductors

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre • 7:30PM

Monday, December 12

Eastman New Jazz Ensemble

Dave Rivello, director

Kilbourn Hall • 7:30PM

Tuesday, December 13

Eastman Collegium Musicum

Paul O’Dette and Christel Thielmann, conductors

Kilbourn Hall • 7:30PM

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the “Great Hill People” and “Keepers of the Western Door” of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.

Information about upcoming Eastman concerts and events can be found at:

www.esm.rochester.edu/calendar

Kilbourn Hall fire exits are located along the right and left sides, and at the back of the hall. In the event of an emergency, you will be notified by the stage manager. If notified, please move in a calm and orderly fashion to the nearest exit.

A **fully accessible restroom** is located on the main floor of the Eastman School of Music. Our ushers will be happy to direct you to this facility.

Please note: The use of unauthorized photographic and recording equipment is not allowed in this building. We reserve the right to ask anyone disrupting a performance to leave the hall.

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Thank you!